

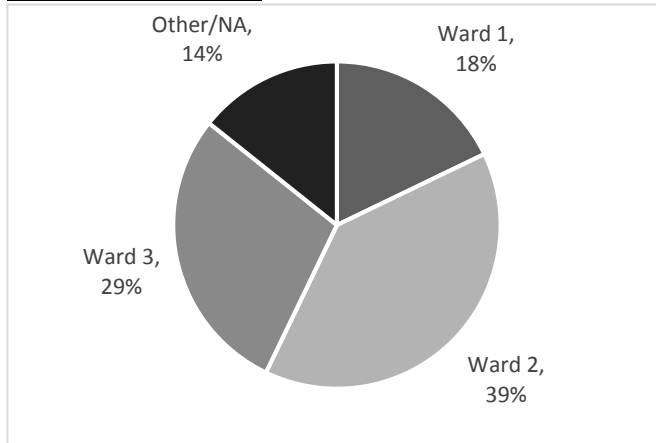


Urban Agriculture Policy Feedback Form

July 2018

The Grand Rapids Urban Agriculture Committee solicited initial feedback on current agriculture activities and policy barriers in the Grand Rapids Community. The survey was available online and shared with local urban agriculture organizations, neighborhood associations, and residents. Results will be used to shape future public input opportunities and to develop policy recommendations.

RESPONSES TO DATE: 84



QUESTIONS

1. What do you want urban agriculture in Grand Rapids to look like?
2. What policy changes would better support your urban agriculture activities?
3. Have you come across policies in other cities that you think make sense for Grand Rapids?
4. What else should we think about as we begin to create policy recommendations?
5. Who else should we talk to?

I. EMERGING THEMES AND KEY COMMENTS

COMPOSTING (Frequency of comments: 21)

Key concepts: Fully legal and encouraged, more flexibility, allow open air composting, provide a citywide program with compost bin and rain barrel distribution programs

- "Compost education and available bins throughout the city especially at large community events."
- "Instead of enforcing rules about what you can have or not have, make them more about the issues things such as chickens or compost might cause (so, for instance, a smell ordinance that would cover multiple things, not something that singles out chickens or compost as the potential source of the problem)."

EDUCATION (Frequency of comments: 18)

Key concepts: Composting, farming, soil contamination, fresh cooking, easy connections for residents, devoted funding, online resources

- "It should be considered that the diverse types of residents in GR have language, income, knowledge barriers when it comes to accessibility of growing healthy food. The rules should be simple and not strict."
- "What resources will there be to help folks wanting to grow crops navigate city ordinances?"
- "City sponsored classes in soil preparation, water conservation practices, appropriate crop choices, and safe pest control methods would/should be a component or responsible urban gardening."
- "[Think about the] implementation of these policies. If the information is not a) easily accessible and b) widely circulated there's no point in creating policy people don't know about."

BEEES, CHICKENS, & LIVESTOCK (Frequency of comments: 12)

Key concepts: More flexibility for bees, chickens, and other small livestock (rabbits, miniature goats, small mammals)

- "More simple process to allow chickens, goats, and other small livestock to live in yards"
- "Think about a resident with no money in their bank account who wants to raise chickens for eggs to feed their family. Think about those who cannot afford regulatory compliance."



EFFICIENT LAND USE *(Frequency of comments: 11)*

Key concepts: Better use of open land, right-of-way and front yard green areas; resources for soil testing, water hookup and tools

- "I work with my neighbors on a plot of land that was donated for our use... Our biggest hurdle is water, we aren't the owners of the property so we can't get water put in."
- "Clarify rules for structures on vacant lots being used for farming. The code should allow for multiple structures on a lot used for farming."
- "Allowing the growing of produce in front yards should be a priority."

STRUCTURES *(Frequency of comments: 10)*

Key concepts: Farm stands, greenhouses, rooftop gardens, and other accessory structures

- "Allow greenhouses, out buildings, growing, etc. in all zoning districts in any location on the property to make best use of sunlight, natural lot features and lot resources."
- "Ability to have a chicken coop that an absentee landlord can't veto."

TAX INCENTIVES *(Frequency of comments: 9)*

Key concepts: Incentivize gardens and sustainable practices

- "I would like to see farmers be able to make a living off of growing local food within the city limits. Right now property taxes and laws make it more profitable and easier to build on lots rather than grow on them."
- "Property tax reduction of \$25."

OVERALL APPROACH & GENERAL COMMENTS

Key Concepts: Level of regulations and fees, easily understandable, accessibility and food justice,

- "Soft touch is better. We don't need lots of regulations on this ... we need permissive oversight that allows people to pursue urban food production while preserving the rights of their neighbors to have a quiet, odor-free backyard experience."
- "This will take initial investment but in the long term will be beneficial to the citizenry. In fact, likely the more it costs, the better it will work, if that money is invested in forming citizens and providing quality materials."
- "Complaint-based, not permits. Be bold and remember that Grand Rapids can be the innovator and early adopter of trailblazing policies that drive local healthy food production and urban agriculture."
- "Anyone with property of any size should be able to take steps to support themselves and their family with urban agriculture... There should be regulations if there are noise/smell complaints, but families should have the right to use their land how they please to grow food."

II. POLICIES/CITIES REFERENCED IN SURVEY

- Detroit (5); Detroit Dirt
- Portland, OR (3)
 - "Look at Portland, Oregon. There are regulations about fowl that prevents vermin infestation when they are enforced, but allow people to have birds/goats/etc. and people can grow food."
- Seattle, WA (3)
- Boulder, CO – comprehensive plan updates and Cottage Food Sales Guide
- Denver, CO
- Lawrence, KS – Community compost
- New York City
- Orlando, FL – Fleet Farming; Planting Strips/right-of-ways
- Utah
- Vancouver – "In Vancouver, B.C. where I lived for three years the city donated finished compost from municipal yard waste to urban gardens and farms. This was a big catalyst for gardens in that city."